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Joyce Calls for Reforms to Combat Backlog of Untested Sexual Assault Kits

Re-introduces bipartisan resolution to increase access to justice for victims

WASHINGTON - Today, Congressman Dave Joyce (OH-14), a Co-Chair and founder of the Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence, re-introduced a resolution urging states to pass comprehensive reforms to improve the handling and processing of sexual assault kits and to streamline services for victims of sexual assault. Taskforce Co-Chairs Ann Kuster (NH-2) and Jackie Speier (CA-14) as well as Representatives Mike Turner (OH-10), John Katko (NY-24), Brendan Boyle (PA-2), Troy Balderson (OH-12) and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-23) all joined Dave in this effort as original cosponsors.

When tested, DNA evidence obtained by sexual assault kits can be a powerful tool in solving and preventing crimes of sexual violence. However, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of these kits sit untested in police department and crime lab storage facilities across the country.

“As a former prosecutor, I understand all too well that each of the sexual assault kits in this backlog represent real victims waiting for justice,” **said Dave**. “It’s past time to take action. In Ohio, we have worked to give law enforcement the tools they need to improve the processing of these kits and hold those who commit these horrible crimes accountable. I’m proud to re-introduce this bipartisan resolution with my colleagues to ensure that same progress can be implemented across the country, giving victims access to the justice they deserve.”

Specifically, the resolution calls on states to conduct an audit to inventory all untested sexual assault kits, submit previously untested sexual assault kits to a laboratory and require DNA testing within a specific timeframe, and to work with sexual assault survivor advocates, sexual assault nurse examiners, law enforcement and others to ensure the response to sexual violence is victim-centered and collaborative, among other measures.

“At least 100,000 rape kits remain untested across the country, and each one represents a survivor who deserves justice,” said **Jodi Omeear, vice president for communications for RAINN, the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization**. “We’re grateful to Rep. Joyce and Reps. Turner, Boyle, Speier, Kuster, Katko, Balderson and Wasserman Schultz for their leadership and for the effect this bill will have in encouraging state policymakers to pass legislation eliminating the sexual assault kit backlog.”

“Ending the rape kit backlog will take a coordinated effort and deep commitment at all levels of government and in communities across the United States. We are grateful to the Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence for recognizing the importance of nationwide engagement on key pillars of rape kit reform,” said **Ilse Knecht, Director of Policy & Advocacy for the Joyful Heart Foundation, which is pursuing a national campaign to pass [comprehensive rape kit reform](#) legislation in all 50 states**. “When the extent of a jurisdiction's backlog is revealed, real reform can begin. When law enforcement agencies account for the untested kits in their custody, communities can begin to take steps to test those kits, hold offenders accountable, and bring justice to sexual assault survivors whose cases have languished, often for years-or even decades.”

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